

Claims

What is claimed is:

- 5 1. An apparatus for maintaining an upper can and a lower can in substantially vertical alignment, the upper and lower cans each having upper and lower rims, each rim having an inside face, an opposite outside face and an edge between the faces, the apparatus comprising:
 - (a) a body;
 - 10 (b) a first flange, extending from the body and adapted to releasably engage a portion of the inside face of the lower rim of the upper can;
 - (c) a second flange, extending from the body substantially opposite to the first flange and substantially coaxial with the first flange, adapted to releasably engage a portion of the inside face of the
 - 15 upper rim of the lower can; and
 - (d) a third flange, extending radially from the body substantially perpendicular to the first and second flanges and adapted to releasably engage both a portion of the edge of the upper rim of the
 - 20 lower can and a portion of the edge of the lower rim of the upper can,whereby the apparatus rests squarely on the lower can, the upper can rests squarely on the apparatus, and the apparatus urges the upper and lower cans to remain in substantially vertical alignment.
- 25 2. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, wherein at least one of the first, second, and third flanges has a perimeter that is substantially geometrically similar to the perimeter of one of the rims of one of the cans.
3. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 2, wherein at least one of the first, second, and third flanges has a substantially circular perimeter.
- 30 4. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, wherein at least one of the first, second, and third flanges is discontinuous.
5. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the body defines an aperture.
6. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 5, wherein the body includes a truss.
- 35 7. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the body further includes a grip adapted to aid placement and removal of the apparatus.
8. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 7, wherein the grip defines a notch in the periphery of the apparatus.

9. A method for retaining an upper can and a lower can in substantially vertical alignment, the upper and lower cans each having upper and lower rims, the method comprising:
- 5 (a) substantially squaring the edge of the upper rim of the lower can with the edge of the lower rim of the upper can;
 - (b) retaining the upper can in position by releasably engaging a portion of the inside face of the lower rim of the upper can; and
 - (c) retaining the lower can in position by releasably engaging a portion of the inside face of the upper rim of the lower can.
- 10 10. A system for maintaining substantially vertical alignment in a stack, comprising:
- (a) an upper can having an upper rim and a lower rim, each rim having an inside face, an opposite outside face and an edge between the faces;
 - 15 (b) a lower can having an upper rim and a lower rim, each rim having an inside face, an opposite outside face and an edge between the faces; and
 - (c) a coupler having:
 - (i) body;
 - 20 (ii) a first flange, extending from the body and adapted to releasably engage a portion of the inside face of the lower rim of the upper can;
 - (iii) a second flange, extending from the body substantially opposite to the first flange and substantially coaxial with the first flange, adapted to releasably engage a portion of the inside face of the upper rim of the lower can; and
 - 25 (iv) a third flange, extending radially from the body substantially perpendicular to the first and second flanges and adapted to releasably engage both a portion of the edge of the upper rim of the upper can and a portion of the edge of the lower rim of the upper can,
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- whereby the coupler rests squarely on the lower can, the upper can rests squarely on the coupler, and the coupler urges the upper and lower cans to remain in substantially vertical alignment.
- 35 11. A system as claimed in Claim 10, wherein at least one of the first, second, and third flanges has a perimeter that is substantially geometrically similar to the perimeter of one of the rims of one of the cans.

12. A system as claimed in Claim 11, wherein at least one of the first, second, and third flanges has a substantially circular perimeter.
13. A system as claimed in Claim 10, wherein at least one of the first, second, and third flanges is discontinuous.
- 5 14. A system as claimed in Claim 10, wherein the body defines an aperture.
15. A system as claimed in Claim 14, wherein the body includes a truss.
16. A system as claimed in Claim 10, wherein the body further includes a grip adapted to aid placement and removal of the coupler.
- 10 17. A system as claimed in Claim 16, wherein the grip defines a notch in the periphery of the coupler.